

Patent Application of
Michael P. Charbeneau

For

TITLE: PORTABLE PLASTIC SHOPPING BAG RETAINER FOR USE IN
AUTOMOBILES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS
benefit of PPA ser.Nr. 60/416125 October 04, 2002

This application claims the

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION—FIELD OF INVENTION

This invention relates to a portable device for transporting filled plastic shopping bags or the like in an upright position to prevent spilling of the contents of the bag during transport.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The use of plastic shopping bags with integral handles has in recent times become ubiquitous due to the low cost and minimal storage required for retailers. For the consumer and

retailer, the T-shirt type bag is widely considered convenient because of the ability to carry numerous filled bags in each hand while transferring bags to or from an automobile. While the plastic shopping bag may be considered convenient to store and carry, a problem is presented when the filled bags are placed in an automobile for transport. After the bags are placed on an automobile seat, floor, or trunk surface unsupported, the sides tend to collapse causing the contents to be susceptible to spillage while being transported.

The problem of spilling contents has been addressed in U.S. Patent No. 5,050,825 issued September 24, 1991 to Bratset. The Bratset patent discloses a shopping bag support apparatus having a base and an upright member, detachably secured to the base which is designed to receive and support the handle loops of plastic bags thereby enabling the bags to travel in an upright position. The grocery bag support apparatus disclosed in the Bratset patent is disadvantaged in that it requires 2 separate pieces to create the support members (i.e. the base member and the upright member).

U.S. Patent no. 5,464,102 issued November 07, 1995 to LeBlanc purports improvement over the Bratset apparatus through the novelty of providing a foldable one piece design apparatus which accomplishes the same goal of providing a stable base for an upright bag positioning member. Both the Bratset and the LeBlanc apparatus require placement on a flat, even surface and depend on the weight of the contents of a minimum of 2 bags to provide stability during transport.

U.S. Patent no. 5,427,288 issued June 27, 1995 to Trubee discloses an apparatus which has retractable hooks on the side to accommodate a plurality of bags. This design is of a rod shaped device which requires a clear path between the walls of the automobile and takes up much space in the vehicle.

An apparatus by Webb in U.S. Patent no. 6,367,746 discloses a foldable bag holder used to stabilize a plurality of bags during transport in an automobile. This device requires numerous parts to manufacture and also depends on the weight of a minimum of 2 filled bags for stability. Storage of the Bratset, LeBlanc and Webb apparatus would be necessary when not in use to avoid possible flying object danger in the event of an automobile crash.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION—OBJECTS AND ADVANTAGES

One objective of the present invention is to stabilize and prevent plastic shopping bags from spilling the contents during transport in an automobile. Another objective of the present invention is to develop such a device that can be easily stored when not in use, or left in place without causing inconvenience or danger to a passenger in an automobile. Additional objectives of the present invention include a device which is adjustable to accommodate various size bags and one which allows one or more bags to be attached in a choice of various positions to be loaded and unloaded with minimal effort.

Other objects and advantages of the present invention include a device which is simple and inexpensive to use and manufacture. This is achieved by using low cost synthetic materials and a high production automated machine stamping process. Another objective is a device which offers a space for printed logos or advertising which would remain visible while the device is configured for use.

SUMMARY :

The present invention is a one piece design having a thin flat plate constructed of a flexible material such as ABS plastic with a plurality of inverted horseshoe shaped apertures cut into the plate body at various positions. Each of these apertures reveal an upwardly vertical stalk created by the removal of material during the production process. The plate is intended to be attached vertically to an automobile seat back rest by means of elastic straps looped through additional longitudinal apertures. The vertical stalk will provide an attachment point around which handle loops of one or more filled plastic shopping bags will be placed in order to retain the bags in an upright and preferably closed position as the bags rest on the horizontal surface of an automobile seat cushion or rear floor area, thereby preventing spillage of the bag contents during transport.

DRAWINGS--FIGURES

FIG 1A shows a front view of the invention

FIG 1B shows a side view of the invention

FIG 2 shows a front view of the invention as it would be configured for use

DRAWINGS—Reference numerals

10 – plate body	12 – inverted horseshoe shaped aperture
14 – upwardly vertical stalk	16 – longitudinal aperture
18 – elastic attachment strap	20 - filled plastic shopping bags (in phantom)
21 – shopping bag handle loops (in phantom)	22 – automobile seat back rest
24 – automobile seat cushion	26 – advertising or logo space (in phantom)
28 – imprinted logo or advertising decal	

DETAILED DESCRIPTION—FIGS. 1A, 1B and 2 – PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

A preferred embodiment of the bag retainer of the present invention is illustrated in Fig 1A (front view) Fig 1B (side view) and Fig 2 (front view). In the preferred embodiment the plate body 10 is constructed of flexible plastic material such as .062 inch thickness ABS plastic. However, the plate body 10 can consist of any other material that provides similar properties of

flexibility and stiffness such as polystyrene, polypropylene, vinyl, nylon, rubber, leather, various impregnated or laminated fibrous materials, various plasticized materials, cardboard, paper, etc.

At the upper and lower edges of the plate body 10 are longitudinal apertures 16 which will provide openings for elastic attachment straps 18 to thread through. Inverted horseshoe shaped apertures 12 are placed at various locations in the plate body 10 to reveal an upwardly vertical stalk 14. The upwardly vertical stalk 14 is to be used as an attachment point for shopping bag handle loops 21.

An advertising or logo space 26 is left visible on the surface of the plate body 10 by placing all apertures (12 and 16) around the designated area.

Fig 1B shows a perspective view of the plate body 10 with an elastic attachment strap 18 threaded through a longitudinal aperture 16.

In Fig 2 the bag retainer of the present invention is illustrated as it would be configured for use. Elastic attachment straps 18 secure the plate body 10 to an automobile seat back rest 22. Filled plastic shopping bags 20 are shown in phantom with shopping bag handle loops 21 slipped through the inverted horseshoe shaped apertures 12 and resting around the upwardly vertical stalks 14 with the weight of the bag contents supported on the surface of an automobile seat cushion 24. An imprinted logo or advertising decal 28 is visibly present in upper center section of the plate body 10 while filled plastic shopping bags 20 are in place for transport.

Operation—Fig 2

The manner of using the bag retainer of the present invention is described as follows. Namely, one first threads an elastic attachment strap 18 through one or more of the upper longitudinal

apertures 16, tying the ends together, thereby creating an elastic loop. The same procedure is repeated for the lower longitudinal apertures 16. The upper elastic attachment strap 18 is slipped around the upper portion of an automobile seat back rest 22. The lower elastic attachment strap is slipped through the crevice between the lower edge of the automobile seat back rest 22 and the automobile seat cushion 24, or slipped around the lower portion of the automobile seat back rest 22. The procedures for securing the plate body 10 to the automobile seat back rest 22 are not limited by this representation. A filled plastic shopping bag 20 is placed on the automobile seat cushion 24. The shopping bag handle loops 21 are slipped through an inverted horseshoe shaped aperture 12 and are snared around an upwardly vertical stalk 14. Additional filled plastic shopping bags 20 may be attached to the various upwardly vertical stalks. The bags are then retained in an upright and closed position during transport thereby preventing spillage of the contents.

Conclusion, Ramifications and Scope

Accordingly, the reader will see that the bag retainer of the present invention can be used to retain plastic shopping bags in an upright position during transport in an automobile easily and conveniently. It can be placed in position for use or removed with minimal effort in seconds. It takes up little storage space when not in use, but may be left in position without detriment.

Attachment and removal of plastic shopping bag handle loops is easily accomplished with one hand. The retailer is advantaged by placement of imprinted logo or advertising media prominently displayed on the outer face of the device. An additional advantage for the retailer is a low cost

solution for a problem directly relating to their own practice of supplying plastic shopping bags instead of paper bags.

Although the description above contains many specificities, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention but as merely providing illustrations of some of the preferred embodiments of this invention. For example, the bag retainer can have other shapes such as circular, oval, square, rectangular, triangular, etc; the bag attaching apertures can have other shapes and positions to accommodate various sizes and types of bags.

Thus the scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents, rather than by the examples given.